Reading Toolkit: Grade 8 Objective 3.A.6.b

Standard 3.0 Comprehension of Literary Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Literary Text

Indicator 6. Analyze and interpret important ideas and messages in literary texts

Objective b. Analyze similar themes across multiple texts

Assessment Limits:

Experiences, emotions, issues, and ideas across texts that give rise to universal themes

Experiences, emotions, issues, and ideas across texts that give rise to universal themes

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Activities

Students will read 2 texts that have been paired for their similarity of theme. A suggestion is The Whipping Boy by Sid Fleishman and The Prince and the Pauper by Mark Twain. Once students have read both texts, both teacher and students will record any likenesses between the two texts. With teacher direction, students will isolate those likenesses of ideas between the texts that comprise the theme. Then students will compose a theme statement/s for the paired texts. Students will return to the list of likenesses and select items on the list that serve as support for the theme/s. At the conclusion of this activity students should be able to state a theme from paired texts and use text support to justify it.

As students read a series of text throughout a unit, marking period, or any other designated period of time, with teacher direction students should isolate theme topics and then develop theme statements for each text. At the conclusion of the designated time, a gallery walk should be organized where an entry for each text is displayed. The entry should list the theme and other pertinent information about each text. As students participate in the gallery walk they should look for a series of texts that contain similar themes and make note of them. After the gallery walk students and teacher should discuss the texts grouped by theme, present their findings to the class and justify their grouping.

Students should read multiple versions of the same literary text. (For example, The Three Little Pigs) After reading each text, teacher and students should talk about particular narrative elements: plot, setting, characters, and theme. Once all versions have been read, the teacher should begin a categorizing activity by designating a particular area on the board to place the title of one of the stories. (If titles are the same, differentiate them by numbering.) Then students should be instructed to review the remaining versions and select one that can join the original one on the board. As the activity continues, different places on the board may be needed to accommodate texts that are too different to be categorized together. Once the categorizing is complete students should look at those they grouped together, examine their themes, and, if necessary, adjust the theme statements.

The teacher will select and provide students with a variety of literary texts with similar stated and implied themes. A suggestion is the works of Gary Soto. In addition the teacher will give each student a copy of the following chart.

Text A	Text B
Author's methods to reveal theme (character, imagery, dialogue etc…) Method One: Text Support Method Two: Text Support	Authors methods to reveal theme (character, imagery, dialogue etc…) Method One: Text Support Method Two: Text Support

Lesson/s learned by character/s	Lesson/s learned by character/s
Idea/Theme in Text	Idea/Theme in Text
Shared Idea/s or Theme/s in Both Texts	Text Support (Texts A and B)

As students read, they should be encouraged to note any similarities between the texts keeping in mind that the tracking of similar themes is the ultimate goal. After reading, the teacher and class will discuss all of the similarities, beginning with broad likenesses and finally focusing on idea/theme likenesses. Next, the teacher should model as well as direct students in the completion of the chart. Once charts are completed, students will share their findings with the rest of the class.

Clarification

Reading Grade 8 Indicator 3.A.6

To show proficiency of the skills stated in this indicator, a reader will express an understanding of the key points or thoughts in a literary text which are the important ideas and messages. Sometimes these points are stated directly in the text. For other more complex texts, a reader must determine an implied, important idea or message by synthesizing ideas across the text.

To identify, explain, and analyze main ideas and universal themes, a reader must first identify the main idea of a text or a portion of a text. In order to do this, a reader must identify the topic or subject of the text. To determine what an author of a literary text has to say about the topic, a reader must attend to details that relate to or clarify the topic. This combination of topic and details forms the main idea. The main idea may be directly stated or implied and may appear in any portion of a text.

While a main idea is text-centered, a theme is author-centered. A story's theme is an author's message about a topic. To identify a theme of a literary text, a reader must first find broader important concepts in a text such as family, prejudice, courage, or love. A reader must observe carefully what characters say and do that relates to the theme topic. A theme is a combination of a "big" idea and what is said about that idea. A theme is a recurring idea in a text, but it also moves outside the text and applies to people in general, not just the characters in the story.

In more complex texts, theme can arise not only from character statements and actions but also from emotional and societal issues experienced by characters. These issues can be observed in changes in characters' values or beliefs, symbols, repeated words, or imagery. Readers can bring different interpretations to a text based upon their personal experiences. If evidence from a text can be provided to support a reader's suggestion about theme, then it is valid.

To identify, explain, and analyze a similar idea or theme in more than one text, a reader must first identify an idea or theme in each literary text. Once ideas or theme statements for each text are established, comparison between or among the texts can begin.

A reader may focus on similar ideas contained in multiple texts. A reader may focus on morals or lessons learned by characters contained in multiple texts. For younger readers, multicultural renderings of the same fairy tale are common. The conclusions drawn from similar texts are text-specific and based on many supporting details from each text.

A reader may focus on common experiences, emotions, issues, and ideas as sources for theme topic and statements in texts. The best conclusions drawn about theme across multiple texts are text specific, based on many supporting details from all texts. As comparisons among text themes continue, each theme must be analyzed carefully. Not only should the theme statement be considered but also how the author relayed the theme to the reader. For example, in one text, the strongest source for theme may have been character action, while in another text, the strongest source for theme may have been imagery. However, both texts may have similar themes that have been developed in different ways.

To retell, paraphrase, or summarize a text, a reader must first read and know the basic narrative elements of a text: the setting, character, and story events. When retelling, a reader must share the story in his/her own words, keeping story events in order.

Paraphrasing allows a reader to take a more complex text and make it understood by placing difficult ideas into simpler language. When a reader can tell a story in words that make sense to him/her, that reader is paraphrasing. As lengths of stories increase, multiple characters appear, and changes in setting occur within a text, paraphrasing increases in complexity.

When a reader can distinguish between necessary and unnecessary ideas and recount only the important ideas in his/her own words, he/she is summarizing. When summarizing, a critical reader paraphrases the important text. As texts grow in complexity, summarizing allows a reader to focus on the essential elements of a literary passage.

To reflect on, identify, and explain personal connections to the text, a reader must consider all elements of a literary text: setting, character, story events, mood, tone, and theme. Next, a reader must consider his/her personal experiences and relate them to one or more elements of a text. A reader might consider himself/herself or a friend or family member to be like a character from a text. A reader might discover that his/her attitude toward a particular subject mirrors an author's tone toward the same subject. A reader might hold the same belief revealed in a theme statement or find himself/herself in direct opposition to the idea in a theme. Once this connection is established, a critical reader is able to define how this connection is made and to construct meaning from a text, citing both text and personal details.

To explain the implications of the text for the reader and/or society, a reader must first consider ideas from a text that involve the reader in a personal way. A source for such ideas could be the events that befall certain characters, unfamiliar settings, the author's tone toward certain subjects, or thematic development of the text. A critical reader should define the literary element and then explain the level of involvement with that element and the effect it has had upon the reader's thinking. For example, a reader who has always been ambivalent about preserving the forests might alter his/her opinion after reading a text where forest preservation is promoted through theme. Through the explanation, the reader clarifies his/her own thought processing and makes his/her position clear to others.